

Big-game hunting forecast is good

For this year's big game hunting prospects, the operative word is "winter" — as in there hardly was one in most of the state.

While a warm winter and low snowpack bring potential problems for farmers, fish and increased wildfire danger, it also facilitates better overwinter survival for all age classes of big game animals. Wildfires have also been an important factor. The recent big range fires were very bad news for sage grouse, but in many areas wildfires have also created a mosaic of early successional growth that deer, elk, and other animals are benefiting from and helping their populations along. These and other factors point to a potentially good 2015 big-game hunting season, and in some parts of Oregon perhaps better than has been seen in some time.

In fact, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife is currently planning to increase controlled deer tags by about one percent statewide, and elk tags by three percent.

Overall mule deer numbers are down throughout the state, although that is the case across the western U.S. and not just in Oregon. However, that doesn't necessarily translate

into lower populations and reduced hunting opportunities across the board.

According to Justin Primus, ODFW assistant district wildlife biologist in Baker City, mule deer numbers are stable-to-increasing and buck-to-doe ratios are at a decent 15:100, although fawn-to-doe ratios are a little low at 30:100 (38 to 40 would be better for growing the populations).

"Because of the mild winter there was good overwinter survival and there should be a fair number of older class bucks available," says Primus.

Elk numbers are still below desirable levels in the Cascades, mainly on national forest lands, which have seen a decline in logging activity.

"The national forests are getting bigger, deeper and darker, and the elk continue to be hard to hunt, with a low success rate," says Brian Wolfer, ODFW district wildlife biologist in Springfield.

For that reason he strongly encourages elk hunters to do some serious preseason scouting, looking at areas burned in wildfires, areas that have been heavily thinned, and grassy meadows. One new factor affecting both elk and deer hunting is Weyerhaeuser's

new fee hunting policy that has displaced some hunters looking to avoid paying for access into new areas. The result is there may be more competition with other hunters than previously in some places.

On a more positive note, elk are doing very well in the eastern half of the state. John Day assistant district wildlife biologist Angelique Curtis reports that elk are above management objective for all their units.

"It will be great elk hunting this year," she says.

Oregon has very good populations of bear and cougar. Sticking mainly to forested habitats, some of the best bear hunting is in the Coast Range and southwest Oregon, with the Applegate unit continuing to produce the largest harvest in the state. For fall bear hunting, focus on where the berries are becoming ripe, while in the spring look for open grassy hillsides and clearcuts where the bears graze on fresh green-up.

Cougars are more challenging to find, and while some hunters are consistently successful using predator calls, most are taken opportunistically while hunting other species.

Deputy DA honored as wildlife protector

Deschutes County Deputy District Attorney Andrew "Drew" Moore was honored with the "2014 Wildlife Prosecutor of the Year Award" at the Oregon District Attorneys Association summer conference held August 20 in Bend.

The award was presented by members of the Oregon State Police (OSP) Fish and Wildlife Division and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) representative Chip Dale, who is the Klamath and Malheur watershed manager.

The award recognized Deputy District Attorney Moore for his support, hard work, dedication, efforts in enforcing fish and wildlife laws and commitment to the preservation of Oregon's natural resources through prosecution of those who violate the fish and wildlife laws.

The Central Oregon OSP Fish & Wildlife Team nominated Moore for this year's award, for distinguishing himself time and again in prosecuting violators of

Oregon's fish and wildlife and natural resource laws in the Central Oregon area.

The Central Oregon OSP Fish & Wildlife Team said that, "Drew Moore has proven himself and we consider him a valuable part of our team. Drew is always available to the team day or night; whether it's a phone call to answer questions, give guidance or to meet personally to review cases. He takes a vested interest in the effort the team makes in investigating wildlife cases and works diligently to achieve positive case resolutions, supporting our efforts."

The Oregon Sportsmen's Coalition, which consists of volunteer outdoor enthusiast organizations opposed to the unlawful and unethical taking of wildlife (to include the Oregon Hunters Association), sponsored the award with the OSP Fish and Wildlife Division and the ODFW. This is the eighth annual presentation of the Wildlife Prosecutor of the Year Award.

Prevent a Litter, Fix Your Critter!



**FURRY FRIENDS
FOUNDATION**

501(c)(3)
www.furryfriendsfoundation.org
541-549-9941

501(c)(3) nonprofit organization

Spay/Neuter Sponsorships - Easy as 1-2-3

- 1 Stop by The Nugget office to fill out a short form
- 2 Call Bend Spay & Neuter for the appointment
- 3 Take your pet — Furry Friends pays. Done!

